

K- LOS Interpretation (HCM 2000 Methodology)

TRAFFIC LEVELS OF SERVICE

Analysis of traffic volumes is useful in understanding the general nature of traffic in an area, but by itself indicates neither the ability of the street network to carry additional traffic nor the quality of service afforded by the street facilities. For this, the concept of *level of service* has been developed to subjectively describe traffic performance. Level of service can be measured at intersections and along key roadway segments.

Level of service categories are similar to report card ratings for traffic performance. Intersections are typically the controlling bottlenecks of traffic flow and the ability of a roadway system to carry traffic efficiently is generally diminished in their vicinities. Levels of Service A, B and C indicate conditions where traffic moves without significant delays over periods of peak travel demand. Level of service D and E are progressively worse peak hour operating conditions and F conditions represent where demand exceeds the capacity of an intersection. Most urban communities set level of service D as the minimum acceptable level of service for peak hour operation and plan for level of service C or better for all other times of the day. The *Highway Capacity Manual* provides level of service calculation methodology for both intersections and arterials.¹ The following three sections provide interpretations of the analysis approaches.

¹ 2000 *Highway Capacity Manual*, Transportation Research Board, Washington D.C., 2000, Chapters 16 and 17.

ALL-WAY STOP CONTROLLED INTERSECTIONS

Unsignalized intersections and all-way stop controlled intersections are each subject to a separate capacity analysis methodology. All-way stop controlled intersection operations are reported by leg of the intersection.

This method calculates a delay value for each approach to the intersection. The *2000 Highway Capacity Manual* describes the detailed methodology. The following table describes the amount of delay associated with each level of service.

Delay (Seconds)	Level of Service
0 - 10	A
10 - 15	B
15 - 25	C
25 - 35	D
35 - 50	E
> 50	F

Source: *2000 Highway Capacity Manual*, Transportation Research Board, Washington, D.C.

UNSIGNALIZED INTERSECTIONS (Two-Way Stop Controlled)

Unsignalized intersection level of service is reported for the major street and minor street (generally, left turn movements). The method assesses available and critical gaps in the traffic stream which make it possible for side street traffic to enter the main street flow. The *2000 Highway Capacity Manual* describes the detailed methodology. It is not unusual for an intersection to experience level of service E or F conditions for the minor street left turn movement. It should be understood that, often, a poor level of service is experienced by only a few vehicles and the intersection as a whole operates acceptably.

Unsignalized intersection levels of service are described in the following table.

Level of Service	Expected Delay	(Sec/Veh)
A	Little or no delay	0-10.0
B	Short traffic delay	>10.1-15.0
C	Average traffic delays	>15.1-25.0
D	Long traffic delays	>25.1-35.0
E	Very long traffic delays	>35.1-50.0
F	Extreme delays potentially affecting other traffic movements in the intersection	> 50

Source: 2000 *Highway Capacity Manual*, Transportation Research Board Washington, D.C.

SIGNALIZED INTERSECTIONS

For signalized intersections, level of service is evaluated based upon average vehicle delay experienced by vehicles entering an intersection. Control delay (or signal delay) includes initial deceleration delay, queue move-up time, stopped delay, and final acceleration delay. In previous versions of this chapter of the HCM (1994 and earlier), delay included only stopped delay. As delay increases, the level of service decreases. Calculations for signalized and unsignalized intersections are different due to the variation in traffic control. The *2000 Highway Capacity Manual* provides the basis for these calculations.

Level of Service	Delay (secs.)	Description
A	≤ 10.00	Free Flow/Insignificant Delays: No approach phase is fully utilized by traffic and no vehicle waits longer than one red indication. Most vehicles do not stop at all. Progression is extremely favorable and most vehicles arrive during the green phase.
B	10.1-20.0	Stable Operation/Minimal Delays: An occasional approach phase is fully utilized. Many drivers begin to feel somewhat restricted within platoons of vehicles. This level generally occurs with good progression, short cycle lengths, or both.
C	20.1-35.0	Stable Operation/Acceptable Delays: Major approach phases fully utilized. Most drivers feel somewhat restricted. Higher delays may result from fair progression, longer cycle lengths, or both. Individual cycle failures may begin to appear at this level, and the number of vehicles stopping is significant.
D	35.1-55.0	Approaching Unstable/Tolerable Delays: The influence of congestion becomes more noticeable. Drivers may have to wait through more than one red signal indication. Longer delays may result from some combination of unfavorable progression, long cycle lengths, or high v/c ratios. The proportion of vehicles not stopping declines, and individual cycle failures are noticeable.
E	55.1-80.0	Unstable Operation/Significant Delays: Volumes at or near capacity. Vehicles may wait through several signal cycles. Long queues form upstream from intersection. These high delay values generally indicate poor progression, long cycle lengths, and high v/c ratios. Individual cycle failures are a frequent occurrence.
F	≥ 80.0	Forced Flow/Excessive Delays: Represents jammed conditions. Queues may block upstream intersections. This level occurs when arrival flow rates exceed intersection capacity, and is considered to be unacceptable to most drivers. Poor progression, long cycle lengths, and v/c ratios approaching 1.0 may contribute to these high delay levels.

Source: <i>2000 Highway Capacity Manual</i> , Transportation Research Board, Washington D.C.		

ARTERIAL LEVEL OF SERVICE

Arterial level of service is based on the average travel speed for the segment, section, or entire arterial under consideration. The average travel speed is computed from the running time on the arterial segment(s) and the intersection approach delay. It is strongly influenced by the number of signals per mile and the average intersection delay. On a given facility, factors such as inappropriate signal timing, poor progression, and increasing traffic flow can substantially degrade the arterial LOS.²

Arterial levels of service are summarized in the following table.

Arterial Levels of Service

Arterial Class	I	II	III
Range of Free Flow Speeds (mph)	45 to 35	35 to 30	35 to 25
Typical Free Flow Speed (mph)	40 mph	33 mph	27 mph
Level of Service	Average Travel Speed (mph)		
A	35	30	25
B	28	24	19
C	22	18	13
D	17	14	9
E	13	10	7
F	< 13	< 10	< 7

The three arterial classes (I, II, and III) used to find the appropriate level of service are based on design and functional characteristics shown in the table below.

Definition of functional categories

Functional Category	Characteristics
Principal Arterial	! Mobility very important ! Heavily restricted access ! Connected to freeways, important activity centers, major traffic generators ! Relatively long trips between above points and through trips entering, leaving, and going through the city.
Minor Arterial	! Mobility important ! Substantially restricted access ! Connected to principal arterials ! Trips of moderate lengths within relatively small geographical area

Design Category	Characteristics
Suburban	! Low access density ! Multilane divided; undivided or two-lane with shoulders arterial ! No parking ! Separate left turn lanes ! 1 to 5 signals per mile ! 40 to 45 mph speed limits ! Little Pedestrian activity ! Low to medium roadside development density
Intermediate	! Moderate access density ! Multilane divided or undivided; one way or two lane arterial ! Some parking ! Usually separate left turn lanes ! 4 to 10 signals per mile ! 30 to 40 mph speed limits ! Some pedestrian activity ! Medium to moderate roadside development density
Urban	! High access density ! Undivided one way; two way, two or more lanes arterial ! Much parking ! Some separate left-turn lanes ! 6 to 12 signals per mile ! 25 to 35 mph speed limits ! Usually pedestrian activity ! High density roadside development

Once the arterial is classified using the functional and design categories, the table below can be used to find the associated arterial class.

Arterial Class According to Design and Functional Categories

DESIGN CATEGORY	FUNCTIONAL CATEGORY	
	PRINCIPAL ARTERIAL	MINOR ARTERIAL
TYPICAL SUBURBAN	I	II
INTERMEDIATE	II	II OR III
TYPICAL URBAN	II OR III	III